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**OEMS ADVISORY**

TO: Licensed Ambulance Services

FROM: Tom Quail, R.N., EMT, OEMS Clinical Coordinator

RE: Flu Immunization for Prehospital Providers

DATE: December 4, 2001

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health have recommended that people at high risk for complications from acquiring a serious case of influenza and people who can transmit influenza to those at high risk, be immunized this flu season.

Manufacturers have projected that total influenza vaccine distribution for 2001-02 will be greater than in 2000. Supplemental recommendations are being made this year to:

- 1) Create a prioritized (phased) system where vaccine available early is targeted to those at greatest risk of severe influenza and its complications.
- 2) Increase overall protection of those at greatest risk of severe influenza and its complications.

**People at High Risk of Complications Include:**

- 65 years old, or older
- residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities that care for people of any age who have chronic medical conditions

- adults *and children* having chronic disorders of the pulmonary or cardiovascular systems, including asthma
- adults *and children* who have had medical treatment or hospitalization during the preceding year because of chronic metabolic diseases (including diabetes mellitus), renal dysfunction, hemoglobinopathies, or immunosuppression (including immunosuppression caused by medications or by human immunodeficiency virus)
- children and teenagers, 6 months to 18 years old, receiving long-term aspirin therapy (could develop Reyes syndrome after influenza infection)
- women in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season

### **People Who Can Transmit Influenza to Those at High Risk**

- physicians, nurses, and other personnel in both hospitals and outpatient-care settings, including emergency response workers
- employees of nursing homes and chronic-care facilities who have contact with patients or residents
- employees of assisted living and other residences for people in high-risk groups
- people who provide home care to people in high-risk groups household members, including children, living with people in high-risk groups

### **People Between 50 and 64 Years Old**

People between 50 and 64 years of age have an increased prevalence of high-risk conditions. Even those in this age group who are not in a high-risk category benefit from vaccination as they can avoid influenza, miss less days from work, and have less need for medical visits and medication, including antibiotics.

Prehospital providers are requested to contact their primary physician, local immunization clinic, or their local Board of Health for flu clinic locations. Information may be found on the following web sites.

<http://www.state.ma.us/dph/cdc/epii/flu/FluRe7.htm>

<http://www.state.ma.us/dph/cdc/epii/flu/>  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)